

THE
CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE.

No. 3.

JULY, 1813.

VOL. I.

**THE EFFICACY OF RELIGION AS CONTRASTED WITH
INFIDELITY AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.**

THERE is no period in the life of man, more important than its close; and there is none in which we stand in so much need of support and consolation. In a time of health, and amidst the busy scenes of life, the spirit of a man will often "sustain his infirmity," but at the awful hour of death, when health and vigor have fled, and earthly objects have lost their power to charm, the spirit must sink under its burden, unless supported by other comforts, and cheered by other hopes than this world can afford. Blessed be God! in the gospel of Jesus Christ a remedy has been provided for the evils of life, and for the terrors of death. That divine religion, which can solace the heart when oppressed with affliction, and even render that affliction productive of real good, can also fortify the mind, banish its fears, and infuse into it serenity and joy, when the scenes of life are receding from before our eyes, when the king of terrors is approaching, and eternity, with all its awful realities, is opening on our view.

So important, indeed, is the in-

fluence of religion, at that period, that there are few, however they may have despised its promises, its encouragements, and hopes in the midst of life, who are not desirous of partaking of its consolations at the hour of death. It is a natural sentiment of the heart, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." We can present a striking illustration of these remarks in a case which has recently occurred; a brief narration of which may be interesting and useful.

A female person of a strong and considerably cultivated mind, whose character was amiable, and whose life had been correct, was visited, by the appointment of Providence, with a severe, but lingering disease. She apparently sustained with patience the attack of sickness, and submitted without murmuring to the will of God. The prospect of death, however, occasioned apprehension, and the last enemy appeared, invested with many terrors. By the solicitation of her friends, she was led to seek for comfort in the conversation of a minister, and to inquire if he could not

suggest some method by which her apprehensions might be quieted, and the bitterness of death removed. When he came to her, he found her in the perfect possession of her senses, and capable, as it afterwards appeared, of close attention and patient investigation.

He addressed her, as he would have addressed any one in a time of sickness, with whose character he was previously unacquainted. He exhorted her to endeavour to profit by the dispensation of Providence, which had placed her in that situation, reminded her that the event of her sickness was uncertain, and that as she was now unable to mingle in the society of her friends, and to engage in the active business of life, it was a time for serious reflection, and for humble, earnest prayer. He told her that such reflections and prayers would have no tendency to bring her nearer to the grave, but might inspire her with tranquillity, and thus promote the favorable operation of the means that were used for her recovery. He urged her to repent of her many imperfections and sins, spake to her of Jesus Christ, of his merits and mediation, his atonement and intercession, and told her that there was no other name given among men, whereby she could be saved.

She replied with great candor, that she believed in God, considered him as her Father, and her friend, and that she had endeavoured to discharge her duty with fidelity in the various relations of life; but that she had received early impressions unfav-

orable to the christian religion, that these impressions, from various circumstances, had been cherished and confirmed, and that she now derived no comfort from thinking of Jesus Christ, for she could not believe him to be the Son of God, or sent from God. She said, however, that she had never accustomed herself to ridicule religion, or to speak with irreverence of Jesus Christ; that she had occasionally read the Bible, thought it a good book, and that Jesus Christ was a good man.

She was congratulated on possessing so fair a mind, and was told that there could be no doubt she would become a believer in the gospel. "Perhaps I should be happier, if I were a believer," she replied, or in words to this effect, "for I feel a *void*, which that might fill, and a reluctance to die, which that might abate.

It was said to her, "you believe from a slight attention to the religion of Jesus, that its author was a good man, but do not believe that he was the Son of God. Does he not declare himself to be the Son of God, and to have been sent from God?" "Expressly," said she. "And do you think," it was asked, "that a good man would declare a falsehood?" She hesitated, "I do not know that he would. His object, however, was a good one, to improve mankind, and perhaps—" "We do not believe," it was replied, "that the end justifies the means. There is certainly an inconsistency here. You must either relinquish the belief, that Jesus Christ was a

good man, which I think you cannot do, or you must believe him, as he declared himself, to be sent from God."

A few powerful arguments in favor of the Christian religion were then presented to her mind, and were the subject of conversation. She was desired to think of them seriously, to endeavour to answer them, and candidly to declare, at their next meeting, any doubts or difficulties, that had arisen in her mind. "We are not afraid," said the person with whom she was conversing, "to have this subject thoroughly examined, and I have no doubts, in a dependence on God, that I shall be able to meet any objections, that may be brought against it. Above all, let me exhort you to earnest prayer, for every good and perfect gift cometh down from above."

The next day was the Sabbath. On the second day of the week, the writer called again, but she had just recovered from a severe attack of pain, and he thought it best to retire, without seeing her; but left for her perusal 'Leslie's Short and Easy Method with the Deists,' abridged by Wrangham, and 'Littleton's Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul.'

It is unnecessary, however, to trace the successive steps, by which she was led from the cold and comfortless state of infidelity, to a belief in the pure and enlivening religion of Jesus. The author of this communication continued to visit her, and on a certain day, on inquiring how she felt, she answered, "I am

much, much better. I do not mean," she continued, "that my health is better, but my mind is at ease; *I believe in Jesus Christ.*"

No words can convey an adequate idea of the pleasure, the delight, which was experienced by the person she was addressing, when she made this declaration. She was requested to give a reason of the hope that was in her. "I have seriously reflected on what you have said to me," was her reply. "I have read one of the books you left,* and am reading the other; and I have prayed very earnestly, that I might be led to the truth." She then repeated distinctly, some of the more powerful arguments that had been adduced, with her reflections upon them, and declared her thorough conviction of the truth, and divine authority of the Christian religion. By these steps, by a serious attention to the evidences of religion, and earnest prayer to God, she obtained a faith which overcame the terrors of death, a repentance, which I trust has not needed to be repented of, and a hope which entered within the veil, and excited ardent aspirations after the bliss of heaven.

When she became a believer in Christ, she read a part of his gospel, was more and more convinced of its truth, and derived from it a comfort, she had never before realized, and indeed of which before, she had no conception.

From the account now given, it will appear, and I wish it should distinctly appear, that,

* Leslie.

though this faith was "the gift of God," in answer to humble prayer, yet it was not a sudden conversion, produced by an irresistible operation, exclusive of means; but the fruit of a conviction, effected by the use of means, and by the blessing of God upon a calm, deliberate inquiry. I wish it also to be known, that it was not the effect of terror, nor was there any appeal to the passions, till the understanding was fully convinced.

On the day of her death, the humble instrument of this work was again with her, and had an opportunity of observing the effect of her new faith, and her new comforts, at the most trying period. She was perfectly calm; desirous of dying, that she might be with Christ, but willing to live, and even to endure years of pain, if it were the will of God. The words of St. Paul, in the fifteenth of Corinthians, 'O death,' &c. were repeated to her; and when it was said, "Christ has plucked out the sting of death," her answer was, "*I feel it, I feel it sensibly.*" In short there is reason to believe, that love to God in Christ Jesus was the last passion which warmed her heart, and it is certain, that the name of her Saviour was the last word that hung upon her lips. She fell asleep in Jesus, and, I trust, has received "the end of" her "faith, even the salvation of" her "soul."

To this narrative, it may be pertinent to subjoin a paragraph from a Sermon by the celebrated Mr. Jay.

"Many are too prone to look

for a conversion, always uniform, not only in its effects, but in its operation, and too much bordering on the miraculous. The soul must be exceedingly terrified with fear; then overwhelmed with anguish; then plunged into despair; then suddenly filled with hope, and peace, and joy; and the person must be able to determine the day on which, and the sermon or providence by which the change was wrought. But this is by no means necessarily nor generally the case. There is a variety in the temperaments and habits of men, and in the methods employed to bring them to repentance. And we should remember, that there are 'differences of administration, but the same Lord;' that often he prefers to the earthquake, the wind, and the fire, the *small still voice*; that he can draw by the cords of love and the bands of a man; that he can work as effectually by slow, as by instantaneous exertion; and that he can change the soul, in a manner so gradual and mild, as to be scarcely discernible to any, but the glorious author. And here, my brethren, we are furnished with evidence from analogy. In nature, some of God's works insensibly issue in others; and it is impossible for us to draw the line of distinction. 'The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more, unto the perfect day.' But who can ascertain, which ray begins, or which ends the dawn. If you are unable to trace the process of the divine life, judge by the result. When you perceive the effects of con-

version, never question the cause. And if perplexed by a number of circumstantial inquiries, be satisfied, if you are able to say, 'One thing I know, that where-as I was once blind, now I see.'"

THOUGHTS ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, AND THE BEST MANNER OF PREACHING ON THE SUBJECT.

MUCH has been said and written on the doctrine of divine sovereignty; but different ideas have been entertained on the subject, different modes have been adopted in representing it, and different feelings have been indulged in view of the doctrine. It is, however, certainly desirable, that our views of the subject should be correct, and that the best mode of representing the doctrine should be ascertained.

By the aid of analogy we obtain our ideas of the sovereignty of God. In early life we become acquainted with the sovereignty of earthly monarchs. The ideas we thus obtain, aid us in forming conceptions of the sovereignty of Jehovah. An earthly potentate, whose will is the law of his empire, is called an *absolute sovereign*, and his government, *absolute sovereignty*. But as such earthly sovereigns have generally reigned as *tyrants*, the idea of tyranny becomes too often associated with that of sovereignty. Hence, in the minds of many, to say, that God reigns as an *absolute sovereign*, is equivalent to saying, that he reigns as an *unfeeling tyrant*.

But sovereignty and tyranny are very distinct ideas, and not necessarily connected, although they are too often associated in the characters and conduct of earthly princes. To act as a

sovereign, implies no more, than to act with *supreme authority*. But to act as a tyrant, is to exercise power, in a cruel and unreasonable manner. An earthly monarch may act as an absolute sovereign, and yet all his conduct may be according to the dictates of benevolence; and all the distinctions he makes among his subjects, may originate from the purest motives.

In representing the sovereignty of God, there should be great care that we do not associate with it the idea of tyranny. There are various purposes, for which the sovereignty of God may be represented; but no one of these purposes requires, nor even admits, the idea of tyranny to be associated. We may exhibit the sovereignty of God, to excite in men a sense of their obligations to love and obey him; to lead them to feel and suitably acknowledge their entire dependence for every favor, their guilt in transgressing his commands, the propriety of submission to his providence; and also to comfort the minds of his friends, under all their adversities, by showing them, that their "times are in the hands of the Lord."

But in what light does it behove the ambassadors of Christ, to represent the doctrine for either of these purposes? If they had occasion to persuade

men to love and obey an earthly sovereign, how would they naturally proceed? If they had ground for it, would they not endeavour to represent his character, as most excellent and lovely. Would they not expatiate on the wisdom and benignity, which had been displayed in the course of his administrations; his regard to the general welfare of his kingdom; his kindness and longsuffering towards the disobedient? If great distinctions had been made, in his treatment of different persons, would they not endeavour to show, that these afford no evidence against his integrity, or impartiality; that the punishments he had inflicted did not proceed from malignity, or an unfeeling, capricious temper? If there were any instances of the king's conduct, which appeared dark and perplexing to his subjects, would not these ambassadors endeavour to impress the ideas of his superior wisdom, his more perfect knowledge of all circumstances relating to such cases, and of what the good of the empire demanded? And from the many evidences of his kindness, and the general benevolence of his character, would they not lead people to infer the certainty, or, at least, the probability, that in those perplexing cases his conduct was governed by the same friendly temper? Would not such a course of proceeding be the most likely to excite love and veneration for the character of the king, and obedience to his laws? What better method could be taken to produce contrition in the minds of the disobedient, or to make the

subjects feel pleased with their dependence on the sovereign; or to excite confidence and submission, under such trials as they might experience, by his general or particular arrangements?

If this would be the best method for winning the hearts of people, to an earthly sovereign, why is it not the best method for reconciling men to God? God is indeed an absolute sovereign; his will is the law of his empire; his counsel must stand; he will do all his pleasure. But he is not a tyrant; he is a wise, benevolent, and fatherly sovereign. He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will; but his counsel is unerring, his will is rectitude, his heart is benevolence, "for God is love." He chastiseth his children, but "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He punishes the incorrigible with death, but it is with the benevolence of a God:—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Punishment is his strange work, not that in which he delighteth.

His counsel is unfathomable, his judgments are a great deep, his works are like himself, incomprehensible; yet much may be known of God, of his counsel, and of his works. Enough may be known, to afford ample ground, to represent him as a sovereign perfectly amiable, and to vindicate his character against all charges, or suspicions of tyranny, unfeelingness, or cruelty. From the fund of intelligence contained in his word, and from the boundless munificence of his

providence, towards sinful men, we may safely infer his wisdom and goodness, in those branches of his administration, which are to us "past finding out." We have evidence that "God is *greater* than man," and that he is *better* than man. On the ground of this evidence, we should all "Be still, and know that he is God." On the same ground, his ministers should answer the cavils of unbelieving and unreasonable men, and endeavour to persuade them to become reconciled unto God.

With proper views of the nature of that sovereignty, which God exercises over his creatures, it must be a delightful thought to the humble, that "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." But it is the boundless wisdom and love, which he exercises in governing the universe, that renders his character amiable, and his reign a matter of joy. Therefore, in all we say of his sovereignty, his wisdom and benevolence should be displayed, as the fountain of his eternal purpose, and the source of all his operations. If this be neglected, we may indeed state, or rather *misstate* some facts, but we shall probably exhibit a tyrant, in the place of a benevolent Deity.

In describing the conduct of the most wise and benevolent earthly prince, it would be possible to represent him in the most odious light, while the speaker might confine himself to matters of fact. By stating the distinctions, which were actually made under his government, and concealing the reasons and motives of his conduct, he

might exhibit the sovereign as a merciless tyrant. He might state, that the king promoted this and that man to office, and neglected hundreds of capable and well disposed citizens; that he caused one criminal to be imprisoned, another to be banished, and a third to be hanged, while he pardoned others, who were equally guilty; that some men were exempted from taxes, and favored with great salaries, while others were burdened for the support of these favorites; that from year to year many thousands were called forth, and sent into the army, to endure great hardships, or to be butchered by enemies, while others were allowed to be at home with their families; that he granted the petitions of some persons, and sent others away empty. Thus the speaker might proceed in enumerating the distinctions made by the king, in the exercise of his sovereignty, according to his own will, regardless of any opinions which might be entertained of his conduct. Before the declaimer had gone half through his discourse, his audience might be prepared to pronounce the king a tyrannical monster, deserving of a thousand deaths, and of the execrations of all mankind.

After hearing this description, another speaker might rise, and admit every fact, the first had stated, and still affirm, that the representation given of the king's character, was *really false and abominable*; and then proceed thus:—"The king, it is admitted, acts as a sovereign, but he is one of the most wise and benevolent

sovereigns, that ever ruled over men. His head and his heart are daily employed in devising or executing plans to advance the happiness of his subjects. He feels like a tender father towards his people, and delights in their welfare. He has a heart to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep. He is merciful and longsuffering towards transgressors, and shows them every favor which may, in his view, be consistent with the good of his kingdom. It is true that he made the distinctions which have been stated, but in all those cases there were weighty reasons for his conduct. Although these reasons were not made known to every one, yet, from his general character and conduct, every obedient subject would have inferred, that the king did not act in a partial, capricious, and tyrannical manner."

Then, by adverting to public and well known facts, by which the kindness and munificence of the king had been displayed, he might remove all the false impressions the former speaker had made on the minds of the audience; and they might be prepared to exclaim, "*O king, live forever.*"

What magistrate, what physician, what minister of the gospel, or minister of state, would be willing to have his own conduct exhibited to the public, in such a partial, odious light, as we sometimes have the conduct of Deity represented from the pulpit? Does not every good man wish to have his own conduct displayed in such a manner,

that his character shall *appear amiable* in the view of those, to whom the representation is made?

It is, however, not only important that preachers should make the benevolence of Deity conspicuous, in their representations of his sovereignty; but it is also important, that they should make their *own* benevolence appear by the *manner* of their speaking. As it is the character and conduct of a benevolent God, which they have occasion to illustrate, it is highly interesting that their *own feelings* and *manner* should correspond with their subject. What can be more intolerable and offensive, than to see a preacher, whose business it is to display the love of God to men, disposed to tyrannise over the feelings of his audience, by his manner of representing the sovereignty of God, and the condition of his hearers?

It is, indeed, a solemn and awful condition, to be as impenitent sinners, in the hands of a sovereign God. But "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." These are the glad tidings of great joy, which gospel ministers have to proclaim to sinful men. The same tender love which God displayed in the gift of his Son, and which the Son displayed in laying down his life for us, should be manifested by the preachers of the gospel in their addresses to men. They may justly view the state of impenitent sinners, as criminal and dangerous; but such objects should excite their

compassion, melt them into tenderness, and lead them to speak in a manner which shall evince to their hearers, that what they say, proceeds from the same temper which was in Christ Jesus. Faithfulness and tenderness are not inconsistent with each other. But do not some of the professed messengers of divine love, in displaying the sovereignty of God, fail to exhibit his benevolence, as the source of his operations? Or, if they bring it to view at all, do they not so place it in the back ground of the picture, that it is scarcely observable? Do they not often exhibit the sovereign purpose, and sovereign acts of God, in a manner so unconnected with his wisdom and benevolence, as to leave the shocking impression on the minds of their hearers, that

there is but little difference between the sovereignty of Jehovah and the arbitrary government of an unfeeling despot?

Whether it be the *intention* of a preacher to leave this impression or not, if such be the fact, his preaching tends to defeat the very object of the gospel ministry. Instead of its tending to reconcile sinners to God, it tends to alienate their minds from the gospel itself. If a preacher cannot represent the sovereignty of God, without making such an impression on the minds of his hearers, would it not be evidently better for him to be silent on that subject, and attend to such subjects only as he can illustrate, in a manner which shall appear to be consistent with the benevolence of Deity?

(To be continued.)

FOR THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE.

An extract from the farewell address of the Rev. John Robinson, to a part of his church at Leyden, preparing to embark for America; with a brief notice of his character.

THE name of Robinson will be cherished with interest and respect, as one of the first instruments in the settlement of New England. As early as the year 1602, a number of serious and devout christians, part of whom were those same christian heroes, who came to Plymouth in 1620, finding that they could not enjoy liberty of conscience or purity of worship in their native country, voluntarily exiled themselves to Holland. After suffering many difficulties, they established a church in Leyden. Of this church, Mr. Robinson was pastor. He had for

several years faithfully served the same people in England, and was honored there, "as a man of a learned, polished, and modest spirit; pious, and studious of the truth; largely accomplished with gifts and qualifications to be a shepherd over this flock of Christ."

The year, in which Mr. Robinson came to Leyden, was remarkable for the death of the celebrated *Arminius*, one of the Theological Professors in the University of that city. To him succeeded the famous *Episcopius*, who, in his zeal for his particular sentiments, challenged Mr. Robinson to a public disputation.

The challenge was at first declined; but through the pressing importunity of the ministers of the city, was afterwards accepted; and Gov. Bradford, (the first Governor of Plymouth colony) who was then a member of Mr. Robinson's church, and probably present at the disputation, says, "that the learning and ability Mr. Robinson displayed on this and like occasions, procured for him much respect and honor from these great men and others."

When Mr. Robinson first came to Leyden, he was one of the most rigid separatists from the Church of England. This was partly owing to the severity, with which he and his followers had been treated. But by experience and habitual conversations with good men, he became *moderate and charitable, without abating his zeal for strict and real religion*. "It is a sign of a good heart, says his biographer, when a man becomes mild and candid, as he grows in years; and sometimes the choicest fruit is sour, before age has ripened it."* This was eminently true of Mr. Robinson. He learned to esteem all good men, of every religious persuasion; and charged his flock to maintain the same benevolent conduct. He was also possessed in an eminent degree of the talent of peace-making, was happy in composing differences among neighbours and in families. His genius, his modesty, integrity, and candor, were acknowledged by his adversaries. His manners were courteous and obliging. His preaching was instructive and affecting;

* Cotton Mather.

and it is said, "that such was the reciprocal love and respect between him and his flock, that it may be said of them, as it was of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and the people of Rome, that it was hard to judge, whether he delighted more in having such a people, or they in having such a pastor."

This English Church had not been established ten years in Holland, before it was found necessary to remove. Their situation was attended with many inconveniences; and after mature deliberation, it was determined, that a part should go to America, to prepare the way for the whole. In the mean time, the majority were to remain at Leyden with their pastor. In July 1620, they all united in a solemn day of prayer, when Mr. Robinson preached a farewell discourse to those of his flock, who were about to leave him; and concluded with an exhortation, which breathes such a spirit of christian charity, and gives such a view of the character of this excellent divine, that I am sure it will be read with pleasure, by every one, who feels an interest in the history of New England, or in the wider and far more interesting cause of our common christianity.

"Brethren," says this good man, "we are now quickly to part from one another; and whether I may ever live to see your faces on earth any more, the God of Heaven only knows. But whether the Lord have appointed that or no, I charge you before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no farther than

you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ."

If God reveal any thing to you, by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it, as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am verily persuaded, I am very confident, that the Lord has more truth, yet to break out of his holy word. For my part I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go, at present, no farther than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw. Whatever part of his will our good God has revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. And the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left, by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things."

"This is a misery, much to be lamented. For though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God; but were they now living, would be as ready to embrace further light, as that which they first received. I beseech you, remember it is an article of your church covenant, "that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you, from the written word of God." But I must exhort you to take heed *what* you receive as truth. Examine it, consider it, and compare it with other scriptures of truth before you receive it; for it is not possible, that the christian world should come so lately out of thick antichristian

darkness, and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once."

"And I wish you by all means to study union in all things, wherein you can have it without sin, rather than in the least measure to effect division or separation. Neither would I have you loath to take another pastor besides myself; inasmuch as a flock, that hath two shepherds, is not thereby endangered, but secured."

Having said this, he most affectionately commended his departing flock to the grace of God; and the next morning they went on board; where Mr. Robinson, on his knees, in a most ardent prayer, again committed them to their divine Protector; and then with many tears they parted.

Poverty and other obstacles prevented Mr. Robinson from ever gratifying his ardent wish, to visit his American brethren. He remained with his church at Leyden, till death removed him to a better country, in the fiftieth year of his age, and in the height of his reputation and usefulness. The University and ministers of the city not only accompanied him to his grave with their accustomed solemnities; but some of the chief among them, with unfeigned grief, declared "that all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ had sustained a great loss, by the death of this worthy man." And Mr. Prince, who visited Leyden almost a century afterwards, says, "that the most ancient people, then living, told him from their parents, that the whole city and

university, regarded him as a great and good man, whose death they sincerely lamented."

These particulars are chiefly selected from Mather's *Magnalia*, and Belknap's *American Biography*.

"Now see the man immortal; him I mean,

Who lives as such; whose heart, full bent on heaven,

Leans all that way; his bias to the stars.

The world's dark shades in contrast set shall raise

His lustre more; though bright without a foil:

Observe his awful portrait and admire,

Nor stop at wonder—IMITATE AND LOVE.

REASONS FOR INTRODUCING EXTRACTS FROM AUTHORS OF DIFFERENT SECTS.

As one object of this work is to unite the friends of Christ in the bonds of christian charity, and to eradicate the injurious prejudices, which keep the lovers of truth at an unhappy distance from each other; we shall take pleasure in quoting from able and worthy authors of different denominations. In doing this, we shall at once gratify our own feelings, in rising above party names and distinctions, and give our readers opportunity to see, that pious and benevolent sentiments, and useful writings, are not confined to any one sect of professing christians. We hope it will also be made to appear, that those who confine their reading to the writings of a party or particular sect, adopt a course of conduct, which is highly injurious to their own improvement and happiness. From experience, we can testify, that real advantages are to be derived from reading the works of authors, whose sentiments, on some important points, are very different from our own. Of such benefits we wish all our readers to be partakers with us. As many of them have neither ac-

cess to a great variety of books nor much leisure for reading, we shall frequently favor them with valuable extracts from eminent writers of different sects. Our extracts will be of a nature, to improve their minds in useful knowledge, and to inspire their hearts with love to virtue, and with esteem for *good men*, by whatever other appellation they may happen to be distinguished, or known.

We are, however, far from being indifferent in respect to what sentiments we communicate and commend. By quoting with approbation from authors of different sects, we are not to be understood, as approving all that such authors have written. On the contrary, if we quote with marks of disapprobation, we are not to be understood, as disapproving every thing to be found in the writings of the author. Much less is our disapprobation of a man's opinion, to be understood as implying a censure of his moral character. We have not so learned Christ, nor so learned human nature, or the condition of mankind, as to feel ourselves at liberty to ascribe all

the mistakes or errors of a man's head, to the wickedness of his heart; or to censure him as a wicked man, because he differs from us in opinion. We have the happiness of believing, that there are many other adequate causes of error in sentiment beside the depravity of the human heart; and, in our opinion, it is not the part of christian candor, to infer the wickedness of a man's heart, from effects which may be rationally accounted for, on other grounds, or from other causes.

The opinion, that all error in sentiment is the fruit of criminal affections, is itself, in our view, a very great error; yet we should be unwilling to say, that *this* is always the fruit of a wicked heart. We can however say, that we hardly know of any error, which has higher claims to be so considered; for we know of none more injurious in its tendency, or which has occasioned more mischief among christians. In his own view, every man's sentiments are right; and if he have been led to believe, that all error in sentiment proceeds from wickedness of heart; as soon as he perceives, that his neighbour dissents from his opinions, he is prepared to view, and to treat him as a criminal. If his neighbour have adopted the same opinion, in respect to error in sentiment, a foundation is laid for mutual criminations, alienations, reproaches, and even persecutions. To this prolific error, we may trace the alienations, and disingenuous treatment, to be seen among christians of different sects, at the present day; and

to the same malignant source, we may trace the innumerable persecutions, and martyrdoms, which have taken place since the crucifixion of our Saviour.

Nor are these, which have been mentioned, all the evils to be imputed to that error. As he, who has adopted it, is naturally confident, that his opinions on other subjects are according to truth; and that those opinions, which are in opposition to his own, are wrong and wicked; he will, of course, fortify himself against every thing, which has a tendency to shake his confidence in his own infallibility. To be informed that any particular book was written by one, whose opinions were different from his own, will often be a sufficient reason for refusing or neglecting to read it; or, at least, to read it with care and candor. For the same reason, he will refuse to hear perhaps the most instructive and pious preacher; or, if he hear, he will take effectual care not to be profited by what the preacher may deliver. On the same ground he will think himself authorised to censure the writings and the characters of others, without any other evidence, than mere hearsay, that they do not agree in sentiment with him. Thus every ray of light, which may rise in the church, will on its first appearance be reprobated as *heresy*. So the light of reformation from popery was denounced as *heresy*, the reformers as *heretics*, and their followers as *deserving of death*. On the same principle, our forefathers were compelled to flee from England, and to seek

an asylum among the savages of America. Many professed christians of the present age, can look back with abhorrence on the injurious treatment the reformers and our forefathers received, and yet act towards dissenters from their own opinions, on the same intolerant principles. By the voice of history they are admonished of their own liability to err, and of the possibility that they themselves may be in the error, and those in the right, who are treated by them as *heretics*; and by the voice of the gospel they are warned of the danger of assuming the prerogatives of the Judge of the world; yet as though it were impossible for them to err, and as though the prerogatives of the Lord Jesus had been transferred into their hands, they can censure, not only the opinions, but the characters of their dissenting brethren. If, instead of assuming the prerogatives of Christ as a Judge, they would assume the meek and benevolent temper, which he displayed towards his erring disciples, it would be happy for themselves and for society in general.

We rejoice to find that there have been learned, liberal, and enlightened men, of various sects, who have seen and lamented the evils we have mentioned; and who have dared to speak in favor of free inquiry, and to express sentiments of candor and friendship, towards such as have differed from them in opinion. The more this temper and practice is cultivated, the more rapid will be the advances in the knowledge of the scriptures, and

the more will christian love, harmony, and peace, prevail in the world.

It is not *christianity* which leads professors of different sects to hate, despise, or reproach each other; and it is high time that this truth should be understood by all, who bear the christian name. By keeping at a distance from each other, by refusing to read with candor each other's writings, and by opening their ears to idle tales, reproachful observations and misrepresentations, good men of different sects may be led on from step to step, until each shall view his brother as little better than the Prince of darkness. But if, instead of this disingenuous course of proceeding, these same persons would mutually act on christian principles, they might find in each other, not only grounds for mutual charity, but for mutual esteem and complacency.

We cannot but lament, to see good men needlessly subjecting themselves to such *restrictions*, in regard to their intercourse one with another, as are at once injurious to their own happiness, and to the happiness of all within the circle of their influence. Their children, almost as soon as they are capable of distinguishing their right hand from the left, learn the party names of distinction among christians, imbibe the prejudices of their respective parents, and grow up with feelings of disrespect, if not of real hatred, towards such as dissent from the opinions of their guides. Instead of being taught to view error in sentiment as a *misfortune*, they

are taught to view it as a *crime*; and each child takes it for granted, that his pious father and mother are in the right, and, of course, that those who are of another persuasion must be very wicked people. Before children are capable of judging of the questions in debate, or even of understanding what they are, they are capable of being strongly prepossessed against those who dissent from their parents. These prepossessions may operate as an injury to them, as long as they live, and perhaps forever. If, instead of this malignant influence on the minds of children, they were formed by the precepts and examples of their parents, to tender, kind and

respectful feelings, how happy would be the effects on the rising generation!

Nothing, which it may be in our power to do, will be considered as too much, to remove the unhappy prepossessions, which now disgrace the christian world; and to cultivate in all, that candor, moderation, forbearance, humility and love, which are so uniformly recommended and required by the gospel.

"Let not this weak, unknowing hand
Presume thy bolts to throw,
And deal damnation round the land,
On each I judge thy foe.
If I am right, thy grace impart
Still in the right to stay:
If I am wrong, O teach my heart
To find the better way."—POPE.

EXTRACT FROM DR. CAMPBELL'S SECOND LECTURE ON "SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY."

"AY, but the teacher we assign him, say they, is celebrated for knowledge and piety, and is of great reputation among the orthodox, as an orthodox divine. As to his knowledge and piety, are we to sustain ourselves perfect judges of these accomplishments, or have not pedantry and hypocrisy sometimes imposed even upon the generality of men? But, admitting that the character you give him were in both respects perfectly just, do even these qualifications, however valuable, secure a man against error either in doctrine or practice? Have not several, whom in charity we are bound to think both knowing and pious, maintained in many instances opposite opinions, each extremely positive as to his own, and ex-

tremely zealous in defence of it? And as to orthodox, I should be glad to know the meaning of the epithet. Nothing, you say, can be plainer. The orthodox are those, who in religious matters entertain right opinions. Be it so. How then is it possible I should know who they are that entertain right opinions, before I know what opinions are right? I must, therefore, unquestionably know orthodoxy, before I can know or judge who are orthodox. Now to know the truths of religion, which you call orthodox, is the very end of my inquiries, and am I to begin these inquiries on the presumption, that without any inquiry I know it already? Besides, is this thing, which you call orthodoxy, a thing in which mankind are

universally agreed, insomuch, that it would seem to be entitled to the privilege of an axiom or first principle, to be assumed without proof? Quite the reverse. There is nothing, about which men have been, and still are more divided. It has been accounted orthodox divinity in one age, which hath been branded as ridiculous fanaticism in the next. It is, at this day, deemed the perfection of orthodoxy in one country, which in an adjacent country is looked upon as damnable heresy. Nay, in the same country, hath not every sect a standard of their own? Accordingly when any person seriously uses the word, before we can understand his meaning, we must know to what communion he belongs. When that is known, we comprehend him perfectly. By the orthodox, he means always those who agree in opinion with him and his party, and by the heterodox, those who differ from him. When one says then, of any teacher whatever, that all the orthodox acknowledge his

orthodoxy, he says neither more nor less than this, "all who are of the same opinion with him, of which number I am one, believe him to be in the right." And is this any thing more than what may be asserted, by some person or other, of every teacher, that ever did or ever will exist? "Words," it was well said by a philosopher of the last age, "are the counters of wise men, and the money of fools." And when they are contrived, on purpose to render persons, parties, or opinions the objects of admiration or of abhorrence, the multitude are very susceptible of the impression, intended to be conveyed by them, without entering at all, or even inquiring into the meaning of the words. And to say the truth, we have but too many ecclesiastic terms and phrases, which savour grossly of the arts of a crafty priesthood, who meant to keep the world in ignorance, to secure an implicit faith in their own dogmas, and to intimidate men from an impartial inquiry into holy writ."

Illustrations of passages in the New Testament, which refer to climate, places, offices, sentiments, manners and customs among the Jews, in the time of our Saviour.

11.

Matt. ii. 18. "*In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning;—Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*"

THE Evangelist applies to the slaughter of Bethlehem, the figurative language of Jeremiah, in reference to the seventy years captivity of the Jews in Baby-

lon. (See Jer. xxxi. 15.) To give an idea of the grief which this captivity occasioned, the prophet introduces Rachel, rising from her tomb, and weeping at the sight of the distress of her descendants. The tears of the living were not enough to bewail their misfortunes. He calls to his assistance those of the dead; and above all, of Rachel, whose tomb was in the way

through which they passed, when they were led to Babylon. In view of the murder of the infants of Bethlehem, Matthew avails himself of the same thought and expression. Not far from Jerusalem, on the way to Rama, and near to Bethlehem, was Rachel's tomb. Who then does not perceive, that this application of the language of the prophet, to a Jewish ear must have been highly appropriate; and to a Jewish heart, not wholly divested of virtuous sensibility, deeply affecting?

See Beausobre and L'Enfant's Introduction, p. 263 and 265, and Beausobre's Diss. xi. sur les evenemens les plus memorables du Nouv. Test.

12.

Matt. ii. 23. *"He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene."*

Nazareth was a small town in Galilee, about twenty seven leagues from Jerusalem. It was built upon a rock, on one side of which was a precipice, from which, we are told, its inhabitants would have thrown our Lord, because he upbraided them for their unbelief. How contemptible the place was, in the opinion of Jews, appears from the inquiry of Nathaniel, *can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* And scarcely less, from the more general expression of the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation, *art thou also of Galilee? Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.* In this national sentiment of the Jews, we find, I think, the most

satisfactory illustration of the text. By all the Jewish enemies of christianity, the title of Nazaræan, or Nazarene, was applied as an expression of contempt to our Lord, because he had resided in, and therefore came from that city; and the circumstance of his having lived there, was one reason why they rejected him. Now the Evangelist says, that the reason why he dwelt in Nazareth was, *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene.* But where is this prophecy? Chrysostom thought that the passage was lost. But Jerome and others remark, as it is indeed most probable, that Matthew does not refer to a particular passage, but to what several prophets had said in effect; and from the reference to the prophets, says that father, it is evident, that he did not take the words from scripture, but the sense only. The prophets may therefore be said to have predicted, that he should be called, or that he should be a Nazarene, when they said that he should be despised, and reproached, and rejected; (See Psalm xxii. 6. and lxix. 9. Isaiah liii. 3—5. Zech. xi. 12, 13.) And he certainly was, among other reasons, because he had resided in Nazareth.

Some have thought that the word *Nazarene* was derived from a Hebrew word, which signifies *a branch*; and that the name, in its application to our Lord, implied that he was that *true branch*, of which Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah have spok-

en. Others refer the name to the Hebrew word, (see illustration 1.) which the Jews applied to those who were separated to God as Nazarites. But though he was separated to God, in the highest possible sense, our Saviour certainly was not such a Nazarite, as either Samuel, Sampson, or John. But that the followers of Jesus, in the days of the Apostles, were in contempt and reproach called *the sect of the Nazarenes*, we have the best testimony. (Acts xxiv. 5.) After they had taken the name of christians, the opprobrious appellation was given to those, who, retaining the doctrines and ceremonies of the old testament, differed from other Jews in this only, that they professed to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

See Hammond and Whithy on the text. Beausobre and L'Enfant's Introduction, p. 270. Jennings's Jew. Antiq. vol. i. p. 425, 426, 427.

13.

Luke ii. 42. "When he was *twelve years old*, they went up to Jerusalem, *after the custom of the feast.*"

I do not find that the age is prescribed in the Mosaic law, at which parents were required to bring their children to the passover. When they were twelve years of age, however, the Jews thought themselves bound to carry them to the feast; and it was in compliance with this custom that our Lord, at that age, accompanied his parents to Jerusalem. The law provided for the instruction of children, concerning the institution, and purpose of the ordinance; (Exod.

xii. 25, 26, 27.) and when they were brought to it, the oldest person at the table addressed them upon the subject, always reciting carefully the expressions, *it is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.*

The Jews had three great anniversary feasts. 1. The Passover. 2. The feast of Pentacost. 3. The feast of Tabernacles. At each of these, all the males were to appear before the Lord, at the national altar; and the object of this union was, partly to strengthen their attachment to one another; partly that, as one church, they might worship together; and likewise to secure them against the influence of the customs of their idolatrous neighbours. Of the institution of the passover, we have an account in the twelfth chapter of Exodus. The name is derived from the fact, that the destroying angel *passed over* the houses of the Israelites, when he slew the first born of all the Egyptians.

A reference to a few of the customs, against which it was necessary to guard this people, so prone to adopt the manners and the worship of the nations around them, will be sufficient to shew us the propriety, and the importance of this institution. But concerning this, and other peculiarities of the Old Testament, much, without doubt, was known at the time of their appointment, which is irrecoverably lost; but which, if known, would enlarge our views, and confirm our convictions, of their great utility.

But it is proper to premise, that the passover was celebrated "*at evening, on the fourteenth day of the first month.*" (Lev. xxiii. 5.) The Jews had a civil, and an ecclesiastical year. The civil year began in the month Tisri, which answers to our September and October; the ecclesiastical, in the month Nisan, which agrees to our March and April. The passover was kept in March; and it was expressly enjoined, that the whole of the lamb, except the blood which was poured at the foot of the altar, should be either eaten, or destroyed. The feast continued seven days, on each of which, sacrifices peculiar to this festival were offered. The days which succeeded the first evening, were called the feast of unleavened bread; no other bread being allowed, during the seven days, to be found in their houses. Upon the morning of the first day of the passover, the master of the family threw a piece of bread into the fire, to give notice that the days of unleavened bread had begun.

1. The paschal lamb was required to be a male, probably in opposition to the customs of idolatrous Gentiles, who considered sacrifices of the female kind, as the most valuable, and the most acceptable to their gods. It is also said, that a male lamb was commanded to be killed and eaten with so much solemnity, about the time of the vernal equinox, in opposition to the idolatry of the Egyptians, who, at the season of the sun's entering the sign Aries, paid solemn worship to the creature, by whose name

that sign was distinguished. Rabbi Abraham Seba says, that this feast of the Egyptians being at its height on the 14th day of the month Nisan, God ordered the killing and eating of a lamb at that time, as a sensible evidence, that *he could not be a God, whom the Israelites could eat.*

2. A similar reason we find for the prohibition, "*eat it not raw, but roast with fire.*" (Ex. xii. 9.) The Syriac version renders the clause, "*eat it not raw; eat it not, while it is alive.*" The Egyptians never roasted any of their meats, which they offered to their gods; but if fire were used, it was to boil them. It is said also to have been a custom of the heathens, in their feasts of Bacchus, which, according to Herodotus and Plutarch, had their origin in Egypt, to tear and to eat the raw flesh of the victims which they offered.

3. It was required that, if any of the paschal lamb should be left, it should be burned. The law extended to all sacrifices, except to those which were voluntary, which might be retained to the next day. But the Pagans often kept what remained of the flesh of their victims, which they carried to their houses, and from which they believed that they should derive most important advantages.

4. It was forbidden that a bone of the paschal lamb should be broken. But they who celebrated the feasts of Bacchus, not only ate the raw flesh of their victims, but tore and broke their limbs to pieces.

It was on the first evening of

this feast, that our Lord afterwards instituted the ordinance of the supper; and as not only the festival itself, but the lamb which was sacrificed, was called the passover, so *Christ, our passover*, we are told, *was sacrificed for us*. The points of resemblance between these ordinances, have often been stated; and these, for the present at least, we leave to the judgments of our readers, without adding any remarks of our own. But a few circumstances, not perhaps so generally known, will not, in this number of our illustrations, be inappropriate.

When a family was not large enough to eat the whole of a lamb, the master of the house invited whom he pleased to join with him in partaking of it. These assemblies were called *brotherhoods*, and the guests *companions* or *friends*. How cutting then was the reproof of our Lord to Judas, *FRIEND, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss!* the traitor having committed this greatest of crimes, so soon after having eaten the passover with him?

The guests leaned on their left arms, upon beds, round a table, on which was set the lamb, with bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and a dish full of a kind of sauce, in which they dipped the bread and herbs. This was probably the dish, into which Judas dipped with our Lord.—The pictures, which we have of the last supper, and some which are otherwise very interesting, are erroneous in the postures which they give to our Saviour and his apostles.—When the guests were thus reclining about the table, the master of the family, or some one,

who represented him, took a cup of wine, mixed with water; and after he had given thanks to God, drank it; and then gave a cup to each of those also, who were with him. In the paschal supper, this presentation of the cup was repeated four times. When the second was given, they began to sing; and six psalms were sung before they separated from the supper. From the testimony of Luke, (chap. xxii. 17—20.) I think it is very obvious, that our Lord gave the cup *twice* to his apostles; and, as Mark says, that “*when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of olives,*” it is probable that only *one hymn*, or psalm, instead of *psalms*, was sung, before they went out.—When wine was first used on the evening of eating the paschal lamb, or why, I know not; but the fact that it was then drank, accounts for our Lord’s choice of it, as an emblem of his blood, which was to be *shed for the remission of sins*. But one humble, penitent, and grateful observance of the institution, will give far more satisfaction to a good mind, because it will be far more conducive to holiness of affections and conduct, than the minutest knowledge of those circumstances of the ordinance, which the sacred writers have omitted, and of which they have therefore deemed it unimportant to inform us.

As the Lord’s supper was instituted on the evening of the passover, unleavened bread must have been used in it, as there was then probably no other in the city. The Latin church therefore thought itself bound, in the

ordinance, to use only bread which was without leaven. But the Greek church, thinking that the Lord's supper was instituted on the night before the passover, kept it with leavened bread. Strange as it may seem, this was one of the causes of the great and long continued schism between these churches. Happily, it is not one of the causes of the divisions, which exist among ourselves. But are we sure, that in the day of our final accounts, the circumstances, which sepa-

rate us from others, will appear to be of higher importance?

Let us keep our feast, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with THE UNLEAVENED BREAD OF SINCERITY, AND TRUTH. [See Lewis' Orig. Heb. v. 3 and 4, p. 462 and seq. Jennings' Jew. Antiq. v. 2, p. 166 and seq. Patrick on Exod. 12. Beausobre and L'Enfant's Introd. p. 212 and seq. Saurin v. i. Diss. 47, sur les evenemens les plus Mem. du Nouv. Test.]

(To be continued.)

ON THE TERMS OF COMMUNION AMONG CHRISTIANS.

"THE first question is, what a church ought to require of those whom she admits to her communion?"

"The answer in general is, she is to require the same as the apostles required."

"The Jews, who were baptized on the day of pentecost, gladly received the word of the gospel. The Eunuch, who was baptized by Philip, declared his belief, that Jesus was the Son of God. The heart of Lydia was opened to attend to the doctrine of Paul, and she was judged faithful to the Lord."

"A church has no right, on mere jealousy, to exclude from her communion any one, who offers himself.—To reject claimants, in any other way, than by conviction on fair trial, is to set up a tyranny in the church: It is to subvert the liberty with which Christ has made us free. [Dr. Lathrop's sermon on 'the nature and design of a christian church.']"

WE are desirous of calling the attention of our readers to a subject of great practical importance—the terms of communion among christians. As the institution of the supper is designed to bring

together all, who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, it is evident, that every one, who has any just claim to the name of a disciple of Christ, ought to be both permitted and encouraged to join in the celebration of this feast of love. We have reason, however, to fear that this is not always the case among us. Many instances, in different churches, have fallen within our knowledge, of those who are anxious to obey the dying command of our Saviour, but are not indulged with the opportunity. There are many, who profess to found all their hopes of salvation on the gospel of Christ, and whose lives, as far as man can judge, display the power of religion in their hearts, who contribute largely to the support of the gospel ministry—who are active in every thing, which appears to promote the glory of God and the cause of benevolence—but who, notwithstanding, are denied the privilege of sitting

down with their fellow christians, and giving a public proof of their affection and reverence for their Master and Lord. This refusal is grounded, not on any charge of insincerity in their professions, or hypocrisy in their practice; but simply on this, they cannot give their assent to all the articles of the creeds, which are made the conditions of communion.

We suppose this general position will be assented to by all, that the members of a church are authorized to require of those, who desire admission to their body, all that appears to have been required in the scriptures, and *nothing more*. It is clear, that private and uninspired christians have no right to make new conditions of admission to this ordinance, which Christ, the great head of the church, the author and *finisher* of our faith, has not seen fit to require. What then are the scripture terms of communion?—As our Saviour instituted this rite for the benefit of his disciples, we are safe in saying, that none but his disciples have a right to be partakers; and that all, who *are* his disciples, have a right to partake. We have then only to inquire, who are considered as disciples of Christ in the scriptures? The answer is—all who *credibly profess* to be disciples, or, to use the very words of scripture—all who profess to believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Son of God.*

* We read Rom. x. 9.—“That if thou wilt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Here we find, that belief in the single fact

It might seem to be desirable that those only who are *really* disciples should be communicants; but as man cannot read the heart of his fellow men, it is impossible to require more than a credible profession, leaving it to God, the Judge of the heart, to determine its sincerity. Now we have no evidence from the scriptures, that any more was required as the *test* of the credibility of such a profession, than a life corresponding to this belief. The only safe and universal principle of judging of the sincerity of any man's profession, on any subject, is the consistency of his practice with his profession. “By their fruits shall ye know them,” is the criterion, which is given us by an unerring Teacher.

The scriptures then appear to give us no right to inquire into the accuracy and soundness of of the *particular* views, which an individual may hold, as preliminary to christian communion with him. We are bound to acknowledge him a fellow christian as soon as we are satisfied that he

of the resurrection of our Lord, is, in the judgment of the apostle, enough to make a man a christian. The reason is, not that there is nothing else in the gospel to be believed, but that he, who believes this, believes a truth, which will lead him to inquire and search for all other gospel truth. To believe either, that ‘Christ is the Messiah,’ or, that ‘God has raised him from the dead,’ implies a belief, that he was sent from God, that his teachings, as far as we do know them or may know them, are to be received as the words of God. The same rectitude of disposition, which has led a man to believe so much as this, will lead him to inquire for more; for “the whole counsel of God.”

sincerely believes the general truth of christianity, and lives according to his belief. The communion is no where declared to be a precise measure of religious attainments. If we think our neighbour's views erroneous, we are to endeavour, by all fair and gentle means, to enlighten him. If we think them essentially erroneous, we may even endeavour to persuade him to delay the act of communion till his faith becomes stronger, and his study of the scriptures more prayerful and profound. But if his means and opportunities be equal with our own—if he tell us, that he humbly hopes his views of religion are gained by a careful study of the scriptures, and the honest use of the lights which God has given him—if he can say to us, in the language of the apostle, “if any man trust to himself, that he is Christ's, let him, of himself, think this again, that as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's”—then, we conceive, we cannot be justified in refusing to him the benefit of the means of grace, which our common Lord has appointed. Religion, let us remember it, is a personal thing. It is an affair between every man and his Maker. Our neighbour is to be saved by his *own* faith, not by *ours*. He is another man's servant, and is to stand or fall to his own master, not to us. His faith may be weaker than ours; but we are commanded to receive the weak in faith, and that too, *not to doubtful disputations*. He may not understand all mysteries and all knowledge; but is it not possible, that we ourselves likewise

may not be wholly exempt from ignorance and error? He may be only a babe in Christ, and require to be fed with milk, and not with meat; but let us guard, lest by our hasty judgment of him, we incur the penalty, which our Saviour so solemnly denounces against those, who offend one of the *little ones*, who believe in him.

But it may be asked, shall we not lend our countenance to error, if we consent to admit an erring brother to our communion? We reply, let us obey the commands of Christ, and leave the consequences of our actions to God. The ark needs not our hands to keep it from falling. We may bear our testimony to what we believe to be the truth, on all proper occasions. We may, by all lawful means, contend earnestly for what we think to be the faith once delivered to the saints. If we think our neighbour to be ignorant, let us seek meekly to instruct him; if we think him erroneous, let us pray for him. But let not the sacred rite, which ought to disarm us of every bitter and every arrogant feeling, which was intended to bind us more closely together by the bonds of love, become the instrument of mutual hostility. Let us find some other method of propagating and defending our views of Christian truth; and not convert the celebration of the memory of our Lord into an engine of persecution against those, who profess to love him as well as ourselves, and whose only crime is, that they do not read the scriptures with our eyes. If christians must differ in opin-

ion, let not the rent thus fatally descend to the foundation.

These considerations are powerfully enforced by the reflection, that if we err with regard to the terms of communion, which we require, it will be far more dangerous to demand too much, than not to insist on all that we may lawfully ask. If this closing of the door of the church of Christ against those, who profess to found their faith and hope on him, cannot be clearly and fully proved to be scriptural and necessary, is it not both sinful and dangerous? Do we not incur the guilt of depriving our brother of a most important aid to holiness, prevent him from obeying the command of his Saviour, and refuse to him an opportunity of publicly showing forth his Lord's death? Do we not take upon ourselves the right of denying him the privilege of seeking to impress upon his memory and his heart the recollection of what his Redeemer has done and suffered for him?—We assume no light responsibility by thus shutting those doors, which Christ has thrown open, and if we cannot defend our conduct by the clear and express warrant of the word of God, we may be sure we shall have a very solemn account to give at his tribunal.

On the other hand, suppose we should not demand all that we might lawfully require, still if we admit none, who do not profess their faith in the gospel, and conform their lives to their profession, religion, at least, will not be disgraced in the eyes of the world. If we err at all, we err on the side of that charity,

which is declared to be greater, than even faith and hope. Suppose the worst. Suppose that some may thus sit down to the table with us, whose views of christian truth are essentially different from our own, and, it may be, essentially wrong; still, cannot this rite be blessed to me, because another partakes of it unworthily? Cannot I affectionately remember my Saviour, unless I am sure that all, who eat and drink with me, believe as much and as accurately as myself? But we must forbear to push these considerations any farther at present. We hope that christian people, as well as ministers, will think seriously of them; and, if they shall appear to be well-grounded, that our church creeds may be reviewed, and all those articles expunged, on which the scriptures do not command us to insist, as indispensable proofs of christian faith and love. The cause of truth cannot suffer by forbearing to use unlawful means to promote it. If we deemed so lightly of the principles we maintain, as to think they could not be defended, but by a system of exclusion, and a monopoly of religious privileges, we certainly should not think them worth defending.

Reserving the liberty of resuming the subject hereafter, we shall close what we have to say at this time, by introducing a passage from Mr. Jay's sermon, on "Mistakes concerning the number of the righteous." In stating the various sources or occasions of these mistakes, for his *fourth* particular, he remarks—

"THE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION,

which prevails among christians, has frequently occasioned a diminution of their number. Indeed the readiest way in the world to thin heaven, and replenish the regions of hell, is to call in the spirit of bigotry. 'This will immediately arraign, and condemn, and execute all that do not bow down and worship the image of our idolatry. Possessing exclusive prerogative, it rejects every other claim. 'Stand by, I am 'sounder' than thou.' 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we!' How many of the dead has this intolerance sentenced to eternal misery, who will shine forever as stars in the kingdom of our Father. How many living characters does it reprobate as enemies to the cross of Christ, who are placing in it

all their glory. No wonder if, under the influence of this consuming zeal, we form lessening views of the number of the saved. 'I only am left.' Yes, they are few indeed, if none belong to them that do not belong to your party; that do not see with your eyes; that do not believe election with you, or universal redemption with you; that do not worship under a steeple with you, or in a meeting with you; that are not dipped with you, or sprinkled with you. But hereafter we shall find, that the righteous were not so circumscribed, when we shall see many coming from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

ON HUMILITY IN THE INVESTIGATION OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH.

Continued from page 60.

IN the former numbers of this work we have offered several remarks, designed to guard against some common misconceptions of that humility, which ought ever to attend our inquiries after christian truth. 'This branch of the subject might easily be extended; but we hope that the delineation, which is now to be given of this important virtue, will be sufficiently precise, to furnish the means of detecting any counterfeits, which we have omitted to mention.

What then is this humility? What are its foundations? and what its exercises, expressions, and effects?

This humility is founded in just convictions of our *ignorance*, and of our *exposure to error*. We should bring to the study of christianity a sense of our *ignorance*, of the imperfection and narrowness of our knowledge. Never let us imagine, that every important truth of religion has entered our minds; that we have exhausted the living fountains of wisdom, which are opened to us in the word of God; that we have found out the character, purposes, and will of the Almighty unto perfection. We are not indeed required to disclaim all knowledge, to regard our improvements as utterly worthless, or to

speaking of our understandings as covered with thick and impenetrable darkness. Christianity puts into our lips no exaggerated confessions. We are not forbidden to see, and we ought with gratitude to acknowledge, that in comparison with the weakness and blindness of infancy, our minds are enlarged, invigorated, and enlightened.—But still, when we look up to God, that Infinite Mind, or cast our eyes around on the immensity of his creation, how do our attainments shrink into nothing? How profound ought to be our convictions of ignorance and imperfection?

If indeed we have studied the scriptures with attention, we have undoubtedly acquired much useful truth. The most important doctrines of religion require no long and laborious research. Every sincere christian easily obtains many valuable conceptions of those attributes of God, in which he is most deeply concerned, of the great lines of human duty, and of the sublime destination, which awaits human virtue and obedience. But still we are ignorant, and very ignorant. Even in respect to the simplest and plainest truths, our conceptions may continually be rendered more precise, more complete, more vigorous, and more affecting; and can we then believe that we have learned all which the scriptures are designed to teach—that the Christian system in all its height and depth, in all its beauty and perfections, has unfolded itself to our minds—that all the perfections of God, and all his

counsels of mercy towards the human race are distinctly perceived—that the character and mission of Jesus Christ, the purposes of his life and death, the offices he sustains, the blessings he bestows, the brightness of his example, and the heavenly purity of his spirit, are all embraced by our narrow faculties—or that we have attained correct and enlarged ideas of our own nature, condition, and prospects; of the perfection, after which we should aspire; of every virtue we should cherish; of the temper which becomes every state in which we are placed; of every aid and motive to obedience; of every sin and snare, to which we are exposed; and of the sublime and tremendous realities of the future world? These are some of the topics, which are offered to our minds in the scriptures. Who has exhausted them? How much remains to be explored by the most enlarged understanding? What a sense of our ignorance should we carry with us in our investigation of religious truth?

But we are not only ignorant, we are *exposed to error*. We are very fallible, as well as very limited in our apprehensions. This we ought to remember when we are searching for truth, and unhappily this is what christians are peculiarly apt to forget. We are exposed to error at once from the infant state of our faculties and from the influence of the passions over the understanding. Of our faculties we have no right to complain. They are noble gifts, breathed into us by God, and worthy of their original

They ally us to those orders of pure spirits, which surround his throne in heaven. But God, who delights in a progressive system, creates nothing in its most perfect form. The human mind is to be expanded by exertion. Its faculties are now in the first stage of development, and like the faltering steps of childhood, their efforts are marked with imperfection. As yet, our mental sight is very narrow. If a complex subject be offered to our attention, a single glance of thought is not enough to seize and analyze and unfold it. Its various properties do not immediately imprint themselves on our minds, in their just order, and in all their relations. We must examine them in slow succession. We can embrace only a part, and perhaps a very small part, at a single view. In this process how easily is some important circumstance overlooked, some link in the chain of causes or effects imperceptibly dropped? How easily are we deceived by resemblances?—how often is one property mistaken for another, to which it has an affinity? How easily do we imagine some accidental appearance to be permanent and essential? Thus difficult is it to acquire complete and distinct conceptions of any complicated subject—and even if such have been once acquired, we must not proudly call them our own. We cannot, at any moment we please, revive them with their original clearness and strength. Memory often loses what has been treasured up with toil, or substitutes defaced and imperfect images for the clear perceptions, which we en-

trusted to its care. Our faculties are not always the same; they are connected with a frail body, and partake of the infirmities of their companion. Dark clouds sometimes gather over the brightest mind. Imbecility and languor palsy the most active intellect. An irritated nerve is sometimes sufficient to destroy the balance of the understanding. The excited imagination presents her visions with the strength of reality, and we yield to them assent, as to the deductions of reason.—If then our faculties so often fail and deceive us in the common affairs of life, what ground have we for hoping that they will never err on the topics of religion? What a signal proof do we give of mental weakness, if we expect, that subjects so vast and sublime as the perfections and purposes of God, the mediation of his Son, the recovery of mankind to virtue and heaven, and the unseen and eternal world, will spread themselves before us with a distinctness, which will banish obscurity or error—if we expect that no important connexion will escape our sight, and that partial views will never give a wrong direction to our thoughts, or seduce our reason into unauthorized conclusions? Who, that looks into himself, and compares his faculties with the extensive objects on which they are employed, can escape the impression, that he is exposed to error?

But did all our danger arise from the state of our faculties, we should have comparatively little reason for fear. We have another and more copious spring of error. We have other seduc-

ers, active, unwearied, subtle, lurking in the very centre of our hearts. Who does not know the power of the *affections and passions* over the understanding?—These, if unrestrained, insinuate themselves into all the operations of our minds, give a color to all the objects of thought, impart to error a thousand attractions, and strew with flowers the path to destruction.

The influence of the passions and inclinations in darkening and seducing the understanding, is easily explained. Every man knows that he has power, to direct attention to what objects he pleases; and that by confining his attention to certain views or certain evidences, he can give them a disproportioned weight and importance, and can thus bring himself to believe whatever they support. Now the passions continually impel us to this partial and dishonest exercise of the understanding; they open wide our ears to whatever can be urged in support of opinions, by which they are flattered and indulged, and turn away attention from those by which they are opposed.

Let it now be remembered, that we all have irregular passions. This cause of error is operative in every breast. The holiest man has not completely triumphed over himself. His passions indeed are not permitted to break out into open acts, but their influence on the judgment is so silent, so subtle, that without suspecting it, he is often blinded by their power.

Let me ask my readers to look

round on the world, and a slight observation will show them the extensive influence of the passions and the temper on the opinions of all ranks of society.—Here you see a man of a timid and gloomy character. His mind is peculiarly open to anticipations of evil, to impressions of fear. Observe how his character has infused itself into his opinions. Observe how he dwells on the most depressing views of religion, until they seem to constitute almost the whole of christianity. To him this system of mercy presents only a countenance of frowns, and menace, and terror. You see him sinking under the most degrading superstitions, adopting the most unfounded and unworthy views of God, and yet afraid to question, even for a moment, the truth of his unhappy errors.—There you see a man of an opposite character. He is cheerful and gay; nothing sad can dwell long on his mind. Observe here the tinge which temper gives to opinion. To this man, christianity speaks only the language of promise. Its threatenings are unheard. It seems to him a message of almost unconditional mercy. Nothing is left in the gospel to strike a salutary terror into the impenitent, or to compose the thoughtless into serious consideration.—Here you see a man bold, fearless, enterprising, fond of singularity, fond of discovery, unwilling to be confounded with the crowd. How exactly do his opinions accord with his character? You see him despising what is commonly received, catching at every nov-

elty of sentiment, starting objections to established truth, hazarding conjectures, which were never heard before, and delighting to throw out opinions, which he knows will appal more ordinary minds. He cares not how extravagant may be his system, if it only be new and the work of his own hands.—There you see a man of a servile habit of mind, given to imitation, and unwilling ever to walk alone. Here too the temper gives its complexion to the judgment. This pliant man takes the hue of his neighbours. To him, the popular religion is divine. He sees the marks of truth in whatever is applauded by numbers. He despises what is generally decried, and abhors, from his very soul, what all around him agree to denounce as damnable heresy.—Here you see a man stoutly defending opinions, the absurdity of which stares you immediately in the face. Why, you ask, this blindness of mind? The man has only one defect, and that is *obstinacy*. He believes these opinions, simply because he happened, at some former period, to espouse and defend them. To resign them now, would be to submit to an opponent. He can bear any thing but defeat, and therefore shelters himself from conviction under sophistry, which in any other person he would in a moment detect and despise.—Yonder is another, whose opinions shock you by their folly. You are ready to ask—has he lost his senses?—No. He has a *passion for theories*. He loves to build systems. Unhappily he has chosen for the corner stone of his edifice a principle,

which is only true within certain limits, and under certain modifications. But this principle he adopts in the widest sense, and nothing is to be admitted, which will not square with this. Common sense he renounces; the plainest passages of scripture he distorts; your best feelings he shocks; and yet the man is sincere—he only wants to raise a consistent system.—Another you may see, who is almost mad in defence of the wildest notions. What has seduced him? He has happened to connect himself with a sect or party, by which these notions are espoused. The adherents of this sect are his constant associates. They continually pour their feelings into his breast; and now the *spirit of party* has absorbed him. The support of his party and the glory of God are completely identified in his mind, and he thinks that the best service he can render his Creator is, to raise the loudest clamor in support of his sect, and to heap denunciations on those, who choose to follow a surer and safer guide.—Yonder you see a man whose opinions are governed by his *interest*. His credit in society, his standing in the church, and perhaps his support depend on his adherence to the popular system. He means to be sincere; he hopes that he is honest; but the dreaded forms of want and contempt, stand at the entrance of the path of truth; he trembles to inquire; and employs his understanding in fortifying himself in opinions, which it is so profitable to believe.—Here you see a man enslaved by the *prejudice of education*. His opin-

ions are connected with his early attachments; they have grown into him by habit; to renounce them would be like forsaking the friends of former years. The change from error to truth would require too strenuous an effort; and thus he grows old in the chains, which were rivetted on him in his cradle. I will only direct you to two other varieties of character.—Here is a man of a cold and phlegmatic temper, and his temper freezes his religion. No doctrine is admitted, which touches the heart. Have enthusiasts abused any sentiment? He wants no other proof of its falsehood; and thus the noblest and the most affecting principles of our faith are rejected with contempt.—Look once more, and observe that man, whose eye kindles as he speaks of religion. *He* is made up of ardent feeling, of creative fancy—and observe how his opinions receive their shape from his character. Simple doctrines and plain precepts do not satisfy him. He must have mysteries; he must have transports. To be rational is to be tame and undevout, and he gives up reason for the dream of enthusiasm.

This subject is indeed endless. It might be shown that every pas-

sion, as far as it is indulged, gives a tinge to the judgment—that the proud man is disposed to reject those doctrines, which call him to be humble—that the avaricious man is prepared to interpret very loosely those precepts, which enjoin liberality—that every sinner wishes to escape the truth, by which he is condemned. But enough, and more than enough has been said, to show the truly astonishing power of the temper and affections over the understanding—and now can any man hope, that *he* is so privileged, as to escape the operation of this most fruitful cause of error, that he is singled out from his whole race and is never blinded by his feelings?—Let the impression, which this whole discussion is designed to form, be fixed in our minds, that we are very ignorant and very fallible beings. This impression is the foundation, and may indeed be called the essence of that humility, which we ought to carry into religious investigation.

The writer regrets, that he is obliged to defer his concluding observations on the marks, expressions, and effects of this temper to the next number.

(*To be continued.*)

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

PLEASING INTELLIGENCE OF A RECENT INSTITUTION.

"THE Boston Society for the religious and moral improvement of seamen," was instituted on the 11th of May, 1812. In the "address to masters of vessels on the objects of the society," it is proposed, "1st, to dis-

tribute tracts of a religious and moral kind, for the use of seamen; and, 2dly, to establish a regular divine service on board of our merchant vessels."—In the report subjoined, it will be seen, that as many tracts have been publish-

ed and distributed, as perhaps could reasonably have been expected. But it is scarcely possible that circumstances should have been more unfavorable than they have been, to the establishment of a religious service in our vessels. We trust, however, that brighter and happier days await us. In this anticipation, and with unfailing reliance on Him, to whose glory we consecrate our exertions, we shall steadily pursue these great objects, confident that God will finally crown them with his blessing.

The tracts already published are

*The following is the annual report of the Executive Committee,
May 11, 1813.*

THE Executive Committee of the Boston Society, for the religious and moral improvement of seamen, respectfully report, that they have attended to the duties which were assigned to them by the Society, and, as far as they were able, have endeavoured to accomplish the objects of their appointment.

They beg leave to remark, that the Society was instituted at a time, very unfavorable to its extensive operation. But great as were then the embarrassments of our commerce, new and still greater obstacles were soon opposed to our design. The number of sailors in employ, since the declaration of war, has been comparatively small; and, from the same cause, we have been able to obtain but little aid, where we most expected it, and where it would have been most effectual, from the masters of our vessels. But difficulties were anticipated, and they have not discouraged us; and having looked to God for His blessing on our enterprize, we have been supported by the confidence, that He would not behold it with less approbation, because it was commenced, and has been prosecuted under so many disadvantages.

Your committee have held stated meetings on the first Thursday of every other month; and early formed themselves into sub-committees, for the collection, publication, and distribution of tracts. Immediately after being organized, "An Address to Mas-

1. "True friendship, distinguished from that which is false, in a short narrative of the life of Jack Saunders."
2. "A sailor's tribute of gratitude to two virtuous women."
3. "The first twenty years of the life of a foundling."
4. "The adventures of a Bible, in three parts."

The society most earnestly solicit the cooperation of merchants;—of the friends of seamen;—of all masters of vessels;—and of all who are interested in the advancement of christian piety and virtue.

ters of vessels, on the objects of the Society," was prepared; and, after some time, was published, with our first tract. In December, two other tracts were published; and a fourth has just issued from the press. Of each of these tracts, we have published 2000 copies; and of the three first, many have been distributed, and very gratefully received.

Our plan of distribution has been, to send a number of tracts to those members of the society, who, we supposed, had the best opportunities of getting them into the hands of sailors. Many have likewise been put into the office of a notary, where seamen have received them. They have also been put into slop-shops;—and, by a public advertisement, sailors were invited to call & take them at Bradford & Read's bookstore, the appointed place of deposit. A considerable number has been sent to Marblehead, and to other places in the state, where it was thought that they would be useful; and a hundred to Newport, in Rhode Island. They have been well received in every instance, in which we have any information concerning them.

Your committee was authorized, by a vote of the Society, at its first meeting, to expend the receipts of the year. We have not therefore hesitated, notwithstanding the difficulty with which tracts are dispersed, in the present state of our seamen, to publish nearly as many as we should have done in better times; deeming

it judicious to have them ready, should any favourable changes take place, for immediate and extensive circulation.

We have great pleasure in reporting the dispositions with which our tracts have been received by our naval commanders, who have not only expressed a willingness to take them, but with great cordiality have welcomed our designs. About 300 were sent to Commodore Bainbridge, when he commanded the *Constitution*, and 200 to Captain Lawrence of the *Hornet*. Three hundred were sent to Captain Smith, of the *Congress*, and 300 to Commodore Rodgers, of the *President*, a short time only before their frigates left our harbor. The discipline of our ships of war will be favorable to any attempts which may be made, to improve the moral condition of our seamen; and while our navy has commanders like those, to whom its honor is now entrusted, we may look with great confidence to the production of much good, in this large and important part of the sphere of our exertions.

Letters upon the objects of the Society, with enclosures of our three first tracts, have been sent to several gentlemen in the large towns upon the sea-board of our state, inviting them to form other independent, or auxiliary societies. To these letters we have yet received but one answer. The Rev. Mr. Bartlett of Marblehead has informed us of the establishment there of an auxiliary society, consisting of twenty-five members, and denominat-

ed—"The Marblehead Auxiliary Society, for the religious and moral improvement of Seamen." His letter upon this subject, we subjoin to our report, convinced, as we are, that it will be heard with much interest.* We have also heard from another of our sea-board towns, that our tracts have been received there by the sailors with great pleasure, and that there is reason to believe, that they are conducive to the purposes of the society.

When our society was formed, it consisted of between 60 and 70 members. This number was then thought to be highly auspicious to our designs. But notwithstanding the checks which were almost immediately felt, in the increased embarrassments of commerce, our numbers have ever since been enlarging; and we have now 149 members, some of whom have extended their annual subscription above the sum required by the constitution. Great therefore as have been, and as are our difficulties, we have much to encourage us; and should it please God to restore the peace and commerce, of which, in His justice, he has been pleased to deprive us, it will be no small gratification to reflect, that, in a day of adversity, we have made this preparation for a right improvement of prosperity; and that we shall be enabled to express the gratitude which is due to Him, by extending to a large, and long neglected part of our fellow-citizens, the most inestimable of blessings, the means of religion, and virtue, and eternal happiness.

* This letter was not published.

GAMALIEL BRADFORD,
TRISTRAM BARNARD,
JOS. TUCKERMAN,
WM. E. CHANNING,
RICHARD SULLIVAN,
CHARLES LOWELL,

*Executive Committee of
the Boston Society for
the Religious and Moral
improvement of Sea-
men.*

NOTICE.

THE important Report, relating to the Bible Society of Massachusetts, is necessarily excluded from this number for want of room. It shall appear in the next. Several valuable communications are in reserve for future numbers of this work.